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THE PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT IN HIS COMMUNITY

To a substantial degree, the challenge of the business world is met by knowing, liking, and getting along with people. Add competence, professional demeanor, ethical behavior, and community service, and you picture a highly regarded public accountant.

What part does community service play in rounding out the lives of professional accountants? Since I have come to hold a conviction on this subject, I am glad to share my views.

The reasons for committing oneself to community service inevitably involve personal motives, which are seldom simple to sort out. To be a successful community leader, one's pure concern for his fellow citizens must predominate. He demonstrates that to give and to help a worthwhile undertaking is a privilege. To become favorably identified in one's community is an acceptable motive, too, but it must be secondary.

We all know that comparatively few people have a chance to appraise the technical competence of a certified public accountant. They can, however, observe his standards in community affairs, and they tend to assume that he applies those standards in his professional life as well.

The whole life of a successful certified public accountant should exhibit a pattern of conduct that is judged to be superior. The client, while he can see technical competence, also wants to view his professional accountant with pride and respect. He even enjoys complaining that his financial statement will be late this year because his auditor is chairman of the Red Cross drive, or is serving on the State Development Commission and on a trip with the Governor.

I think you will find that success as a professional man and community service go hand in hand. Business and professional leaders are usually sought to head up civic and community projects. To serve his community effec-

tively, one must command prestige in his own right. We have all seen the trouble the unknown John Doe can have in getting a telephone call returned or a quorum present for a meeting. You will find that your professional reputation strengthens your ability to serve your community, while at the same time creditable community activities enhance your professional standing.

How do you get started? Those beginning public practice should be well identified with their Junior Chamber of Commerce, university alumni club, or some charitable organization by the end of the fourth or fifth year. But membership alone is not enough—you should accept leadership as an officer, director, or committee chairman.

At the same time, you must be selective, for community service takes time, and clients and professional competence must not be allowed to suffer. Appraise realistically your abilities in public speaking, serving as chairman, and your personal contacts. Choose positions you are reasonably sure to succeed in, but which will also test and stretch your abilities.

We cannot all be leaders on the larger stage; there are smaller areas of influence that are most suitable for professional men and women. Spot them in your community. They can be stepping stones to greater responsibility. The size and character of your community will probably determine your scope of service. Larger cities have opportunities for local neighborhood activity that may lead to service on a larger scale.

By working shoulder to shoulder with your fellow citizens you show an awareness of responsibility to society. Thus the professional accountant becomes respected, broadens his experience and enlarges the number of people he knows. I have found such work a privilege and a source of much satisfaction.

HUGH F. PURVIS